

1-2-1987

# Subcommittee on Postal Office, Level Services, Communication Washington AP News Report Postal Workers Call Management Insensitive in Massacre Aftermath - 3/18/1987; Edmond Survivors Charge Callousness by Postal Service - English OKC 3/19/1987

The Mickey Leland Papers & Collection Addendum. (Texas Southern University, 2015)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/mla\\_hcw](http://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/mla_hcw)

 Part of the [Public Policy Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

The Mickey Leland Papers & Collection Addendum. (Texas Southern University, 2015), "Subcommittee on Postal Office, Level Services, Communication Washington AP News Report Postal Workers Call Management Insensitive in Massacre Aftermath - 3/18/1987; Edmond Survivors Charge Callousness by Postal Service -English OKC 3/19/1987" (2015). The Mickey Leland Papers & Collection Addendum: Education, African Americans Repairs Education, African Amer. Racial Inequities (1987). *Series 4: House Committees, Washington, 1978 - 1989*. Series 4, Box 67, Folder 2168. Paper 569.  
[http://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/mla\\_hcw/569](http://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/mla_hcw/569)

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Mickey Leland Archives at Digital Scholarship @ Texas Southern University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Series 4: House Committees, Washington, 1978 - 1989 by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship @ Texas Southern University. For more information, please contact [rodriguezam@TSU.EDU](mailto:rodriguezam@TSU.EDU).

AP 03-18-87 02:29 PET

AM-Postal Massacre,660<

Postal Workers Call Management Insensitive in Massacre Aftermath<

By ROBERT M. ANDREWS=

Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) — Grief-stricken survivors of the Edmond, Okla., post office massacre last summer suffered further pain from an utterly cold and insensitive management," including a postmaster who banned reading of sympathy mail on the job, a House panel was told Wednesday.

At first we were attacked by Pat Sherrill and now we were under emotional attack from management," said Steve Brehm, a postal clerk at Edmond.

Edmond postal worker Patrick Sherrill shot and killed 14 fellow employees and six others before he committed suicide on the morning of Aug. 20, 1986.

We did not know the reason for the attack then and we will never know why it happened," Postmaster General Preston R. Tisch told a joint subcommittee hearing of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee.

The emotional aftermath of the massacre was described by Brehm and Carla Phillips, whose husband Lee was killed in the attack. They were backed by Moe Biller, president of the AFL-CIO's American Postal Workers Union, who said survivors encountered a

bureaucratic stone wall" in trying to obtain death benefits.

Tisch acknowledged that we have made some mistakes along the way" but said all surviving employees and families now are receiving or have received the benefits to which they are entitled."

Said Tisch, The rest of us in the Postal Service want to ensure that all issues are resolved promptly, fairly and completely."

Looking back, David H. Charters, senior assistant postmaster general for human resources, said Sherrill should never have been hired as a postal worker.

Nonetheless, Charters said, mass murder is not a consequence which can reasonably be expected to flow from a faulty hiring decision."

Mrs. Phillips, who also worked for the Postal Service, told of months of frustrating efforts to obtain survivors' benefits after the massacre, even though postal officials assured her they would bend all the rules" and take care of everything." She said her husband's funeral expenses weren't paid for nearly seven months.

Mrs. Phillips said the families were angered to learn of a plan — made without consulting them — to erect a memorial inscribed with Sherrill's name among the list of victims.

Brehm said he and other surviving employees, acting out of a sense of responsibility," returned to work on Aug. 21, less than 24 hours after the massacre.

While we didn't expect special praise, none of us was prepared for the insensitive treatment we received," he said.

Brehm said Edmond's new postmaster, Dale Fowlkes, met with his employees for the first time on Oct. 14, less than two months after the massacre, and announced strict new work rules because he said their job performance was unsatisfactory.

He said Fowlkes banned personal telephone calls by employees, prohibited any reading of hundreds of sympathy cards and letters during work hours, and issued a veiled threat to hire replacements. At the same time, Brehm said, workers were demoralized" when Fowlkes gave cash awards to four managers for good work in handling survivors' benefits.

Fowlkes, who recently was promoted and transferred to Oklahoma City, did not attend the House hearing Wednesday. Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Texas, who chaired the hearing, expressed regret that Fowlkes had not been invited to testify.

Biller, the union president, said the Edmond postal workers who survived the massacre have faithfully moved the mail since then, but instead of acknowledgement and appreciation, they were rewarded with a crackdown on work rules and had to contend with an utterly



cold and insensitive management."

Leland declared that something went terribly wrong" in the aftermath of the shootout, and Rep. Frank Horton, R-NY., said the witnesses' testimony was incredible and appalling."

How can the Postal Service expect to have any credibility with the public, the Congress, its own employees, when it cannot keep track of its' asked Rep. Frank McCloskey, D-Ind.

And why should its spokesmen talk of a rate increase in 1988 with this kind of inefficiency in place?"

\*\*\*\*\*  
AP 03-18-87 02:38 PET

AM-Postal Massacre, Okla Bjt,660<

Eds: Also moving nationally<

Postal Workers Call Management Insensitive in Massacre Aftermath<

By ROBERT M. ANDREWS=

Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) \_ Grief-stricken survivors of the Edmond, Okla., post office massacre last summer suffered further pain from an utterly cold and insensitive management," including a postmaster who banned reading of sympathy mail on the job, a House panel was told Wednesday.

At first we were attacked by Pat Sherrill and now we were under emotional attack from management," said Steve Brehm, a postal clerk at Edmond.

Edmond postal worker Patrick Henry Sherrill shot and killed 14 fellow employees and wounded six others before he committed suicide on the morning of Aug. 20.

We did not know the reason for the attack then and we will never know why it happened," Postmaster General Preston R. Tisch told a joint subcommittee hearing of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee.

The emotional aftermath of the massacre was described by Brehm and Carla Phillips, whose husband Lee was killed in the attack. They were backed by Moe Biller, president of the AFL-CIO's American Postal Workers Union, who said survivors encountered a bureaucratic stone wall" in trying to obtain death benefits.

Tisch acknowledged that we have made some mistakes along the way" but said all surviving employees and families now are receiving or have received the benefits to which they are entitled."

Said Tisch, The rest of us in the Postal Service want to ensure that all issues are resolved promptly, fairly and completely."

Looking back, David H. Charters, senior assistant postmaster general for human resources, said Sherrill should never have been hired as a postal worker.

Nonetheless, Charters said, mass murder is not a consequence which can reasonably be expected to flow from a faulty hiring decision."

Mrs. Phillips, who also worked for the Postal Service, told of months of frustrating efforts to obtain survivors' benefits after the massacre, even though postal officials assured her they would bend all the rules" and take care of everything." She said her husband's funeral expenses weren't paid for nearly seven months.

Mrs. Phillips said the families were angered to learn of a plan \_ made without consulting them \_ to erect a memorial inscribed with Sherrill's name among the list of victims.

Brehm said he and other surviving employees, acting out of a sense of responsibility," returned to work on Aug. 21, less than 24 hours after the massacre.

While we didn't expect special praise, none of us was prepared for the insensitive treatment we received," he said.

Brehm said Edmond's new postmaster, Dale Fowlkes, met with his employees for the first time on Oct. 14, less than two months after the massacre, and announced strict new work rules because he said



their job performance was unsatisfactory.

He said Fowlkes banned personal telephone calls by employees, prohibited any reading of hundreds of sympathy cards and letters during work hours, and issued a veiled threat to hire replacements. At the same time, Brehm said, workers were 'demoralized' when Fowlkes gave cash awards to four managers for good work in handling survivors' benefits.

Fowlkes, who recently was promoted and transferred to Oklahoma City, did not attend the House hearing Wednesday. Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Texas, who chaired the hearing, expressed regret that Fowlkes had not been invited to testify.

Biller, the union president, said the Edmond postal workers who survived the massacre have faithfully moved the mail since then, but instead of acknowledgement and appreciation, they were rewarded with a crackdown on work rules and had to contend with an utterly cold and insensitive management.'

Leland declared that 'something went terribly wrong' in the aftermath of the shootout, and Rep. Frank Horton, R-N.Y., said the witnesses' testimony was 'incredible and appalling.'

How can the Postal Service expect to have any credibility with the public, the Congress, its own employen actions?' asked Rep. Frank Mc

And why should its spokesmen talk of a rate increase in 1988 with this kind of inefficiency in place?'

\*\*\*\*\*

AP 03-18-87 06:59 PET

AM-Postal Massacre, 1st Ld-Writethru, a0680,670<

Postal Workers Call Management Insensitive in Massacre Aftermath<

EDs: Inserts 1 graf after 16th graf, Fowlkes, who, with Fowlkes'

no comment; picks up 17th graf pvs, Biller, the<

By ROBERT M. ANDREWS=

Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) \_ Grief-stricken survivors of the Edmond, Okla., post office massacre last summer suffered further pain from an utterly cold and insensitive management,' including a postmaster who banned reading of sympathy mail on the job, a House panel was told Wednesday.

At first we were attacked by Pat Sherrill and now we were under emotional attack from management,' said Steve Brehm, a postal clerk at Edmond.

Edmond postal worker Patrick Sherrill shot and killed 14 fellow employees and seriously wounded six others before he committed suicide on the morning of Aug. 20, 1986.

We did not know the reason for the attack then and we will never know why it happened,' Postmaster General Preston R. Tisch told a joint subcommittee hearing of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee.

The emotional aftermath of the massacre was described by Brehm and Carla Phillips, whose husband Lee was killed in the attack. They were backed by Moe Biller, president of the AFL-CIO's American Postal Workers Union, who said survivors encountered a

bureaucratic stone wall' in trying to obtain death benefits.

Tisch acknowledged that we have made some mistakes along the way' but said all surviving employees and families now are receiving or have received the benefits to which they are entitled.'

Said Tisch, The ensure that all issues are resolved promptly, fairly completely.'

Looking back, David H. Charters, senior assistant postmaster general for human resources, said Sherrill should never have been hired as a postal worker.

Nonetheless, Charters said, mass murder is not a consequence which can reasonably be expected to flow from a faulty hiring decision.'

Mrs. Phillips, who also worked for the Postal Service, told of months of frustrating eff massacre, even though postal officials assured



bend all the rules'' and take care of everything.'' She said her husband's funeral expenses weren't paid for nearly seven months.

Mrs. Phhe families were angered to learn of a plan \_ made without consulting them \_ to erect a memorial inscribed with Sherrill's name among the list of victims.

Brehm said he and other surviving employees, acting out of a sense of responsibility, returned to work on Aug. 21, less than 24 hours after the massacre.

While we didn't expect special praise, none of us was prepared for the insensitive treatment we received,'' he said.

Brehm said Edmond's new postmaster, Dale Fowlkes, met with his employees for the first time on Oct. 14, less than two months after the massacre, and announced strict new work rules because he said their job performance was unsatisfactory.

He said Fowlkes banned personal telephone calls by employees, prohibited any reading of hundreds of sympathy cards and letters during work hours, and issued a veiled threat to hire replacements. At the same time, Brehm said, workers were demoralized'' when Fowlkes gave cash awards to four managers for good work in handling survivors' benefits.

Fowlkes, who recently was promoted and transferred to Oklahoma City, did not attend the House hearing Wednesday. Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Texas, who chaired the hearing, expressed regret that Fowlkes had not beephone at his home in Edmond, a suburb of Oklahoma City, Fowlkes refused to comment.

Billie, the union president, said the Edmond postal workers who survived the massacre have faithfully moved the mail since then, but instead of acknowledgement and appreciation, they were rewarded with a crackdown on work rules and had to contend with an utterly cold and insensitive management.'

Leland declared that something went terribly wrong'' in the aftermath of the shootout, and Rep. Frank Horton, R-N.Y., said the witnesses' testimony was incredible and appalling.'

How c Postal Service expect to have any credibility with the public, the Congress, its own employees, when it cannot keep track of its own actions?'' asked Rep. Frank McCloskey, D-Ind.

And why should its spokesmen talk of a rate increase in 1988 with this kind of inefficiency in place?''



AP 03-19-87 00:42 AET

AM-Postal Massacre, 1st Ld-Writethru, a0680,710<

Postal Workers Call Management Insensitive in Massacre Aftermath<  
Eds: SUBS 15th graf, bgng: He said xxx to CORRECT that Postal  
Service gave cash awards; INSERTS 1 graf after 16th graf: Fowlkes,  
who, xxx with Fowlkes' no comment; picks up 17th graf pvs: Biller,  
the<

By ROBERT M. ANDREWS=

Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) \_ Grief-stricken survivors of the Edmond, Okla.,  
post office massacre last summer suffered further pain from an  
utterly cold and insensitive management," including a postmaster  
who banned reading of sympathy mail on the job, a House panel was  
told Wednesday.

At first we were attacked by Pat Sherrill and now we were  
under emotional attack from management," said Steve Brehm, a  
postal clerk at Edmond.

Edmond postal worker Patrick Sherrill shot and killed 14 fellow  
employees and seriously wounded six others before he committed  
suicide on the morning of Aug. 20, 1986.

We did not know the reason for the attack then and we will  
never know why it happened," Postmaster General Preston R. Tisch  
told a joint subcommittee hearing of the House Post Office and  
Civil Service Committee.

The emotional aftermath of the massacre was described by Brehm  
and Carla Phillips, whose husband Lee was killed in the attack.  
They were backed by Moe Biller, president of the AFL-CIO's American



Postal Workers Union, who said survivors encountered a bureaucratic stone wall'' in trying to obtain death benefits.

Tisch acknowledged that we have made some mistakes along the way'' but said all surviving employees and families now are receiving or have received the benefits to which they are entitled.''

Said Tisch, The rest of us in the Postal Service want to ensure that all issues are resolved promptly, fairly and completely.''

Looking back, David H. Charters, senior assistant postmaster general for human resources, said Sherrill should never have been hired as a postal worker.

Nonetheless, Charters said, mass murder is not a consequence which can reasonably be expected to flow from a faulty hiring decision.''

Mrs. Phillips, who also worked for the Postal Service, told of months of frustrating efforts to obtain survivors' benefits after the massacre, even though postal officials assured her they would bend all the rules'' and take care of everything.''. She said her husband's funeral expenses weren't paid for nearly seven months.

Mrs. Phillips said the families were angered to learn of a plan made without consulting them to erect a memorial inscribed with Sherrill's name among the list of victims.

Brehm said he and other surviving employees, acting out of a sense of responsibility, returned to work on Aug. 21, less than 24 hours after the massacre.

While we didn't expect special praise, none of us was prepared for the insensitive treatment we received,''. he said.

Brehm said Edmond's new postmaster, Dale Fowlkes, met with his employees for the first time on Oct. 14, less than two months after the massacre, and announced strict new work rules because he said their job performance was unsatisfactory.

He said Fowlkes banned personal telephone calls by employees, prohibited any reading of hundreds of sympathy cards and letters during work hours, and issued a veiled threat to hire replacements. At the same time, Brehm said, workers were demoralized'' when the Postal Service gave cash awards to four managers for good work in handling survivors' benefits.

Fowlkes, who recently was promoted and transferred to Oklahoma City, did not attend the House hearing Wednesday. Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Texas, who chaired the hearing, expressed regret that Fowlkes had not been invited to testify.

Reached by telephone at his home in Edmond, a suburb of Oklahoma City, Fowlkes refused to comment.

Biller, the union president, said the Edmond postal workers who survived the massacre have faithfully moved the mail since then, but instead of acknowledgement and appreciation, they were rewarded with a crackdown on work rules and had to contend with an utterly cold and insensitive management.''

Leland declared that something went terribly wrong'' in the aftermath of the shootout, and Rep. Frank Horton, R-N.Y., said the witnesses' testimony was incredible and appalling.''

How can the Postal Service expect to have any credibility with the public, the Congress, its own employees, when it cannot keep track of its own actions?'' asked Rep. Frank McCloskey, D-Ind.

And why should its spokesmen talk of a rate increase in 1988 with this kind of inefficiency in place?''

\*\*\*\*\*



# Edmond Survivors Charge Callousness by

By Ed Kelley  
Washington Bureau  
WASHINGTON — Law-  
makers, two postal workers  
and a union official sharply  
criticized the U.S. Postal  
Service Wednesday for call-  
ous treatment of surviving  
workers and delays in bene-  
fits since the Edmond post  
office massacre last sum-  
mer.

Postmaster General  
Postman R. Tisch acknowl-  
edged that "mistakes have  
been made along the way"  
in how survivors and fami-  
lies have been treated in  
the ensuing seven months  
since part-time letter carri-  
er Patrick Henry Sherrill  
was shot down last week after a  
lap union leader com-

plaint of his treatment of  
the job or so Edmond em-  
ployees as they tried to  
cope with the Aug. 29 tra-  
gedy.

Rep. Mickey Leland, D-  
Texas, chairman of one of  
two subcommittees that  
staged the hearing, de-  
scribed the postal service's  
"confusing and insensitive  
handling" of workers'  
needs as "unacceptable."

Tisch told two congres-  
sional panels Wednesday  
that all employees and fam-  
ilies "now are receiving  
the needed seven months'  
benefits to which they are en-  
titled."

Others weren't satisfied.  
Rep. Frank Horton, R-  
N.Y., told postal officials:  
"At first we were at-  
tacked by Pat Sherrill and  
now we are under emotion-  
al attack from manage-  
ment," said Steve Brehm,  
who was on the job when  
Sherrill's shooting ram-  
page began.

Added Carla Phillips,  
whose husband, Lee, was  
killed by Sherrill: "As much  
as the postal service prom-  
ised, they delivered a whole  
lot less."

Rep. Frank Horton, R-  
N.Y., told postal officials:  
"I think you have a serious  
problem, and a very tran-  
sient one."

Criticism was leveled at  
H. Dale Fowlkes, Edmond's  
postmaster at the time of  
the shootings, who was  
branded by Brehm and a  
top union leader as insen-  
sitive to the needs of grief-  
stricken workers.

For example, a memo  
random from Fowlkes  
shows workers were allow-  
ed only four days to read -  
and on their own time -

the hundreds of sympathy  
cards that came from  
across the country follow-  
ing the shootings. The let-  
ters "will be discarded  
thereafter," Fowlkes or-  
dered.

In October, Fowlkes criti-  
cized employees for sloppy  
work and suggested thou-  
sands of applicants for  
postal service work were  
ready to take their jobs if  
they didn't improve, Brehm  
said.

"We certainly didn't  
think that we had earned  
this threat," Brehm said.

Horton said he wasn't  
"utter" Fowlkes, "but I do  
think he was very callous  
in what he said and what he  
did."

Rep. David H. Char-  
lton, senior assistant post-  
master general, "I can't  
disagree with those conclu-  
sions."

Moe Blier, president of  
the American Postal Work-  
ers Union said he spoke to  
two assistant postmasters

general March 9 at a meet-  
ing arranged by Tisch to  
complain about the delay in  
survivors' benefits and  
Fowlkes' performance.

"I had suggested that  
they put him where he  
would not have direct su-  
pervision over anybody,"  
Blier told The Oklahoman  
after Wednesday's hearing.

Last Saturday, Fowlkes,  
a 33-year veteran with the  
postal service, was reas-  
signed to the Oklahoma  
see EDMOND, Page 2

# Postal Service

2-19-87  
2-19-87  
2-19-87



From Page 1

City office as manager of logistics and distribution services after nearly nine months as Edmond postmaster.

"I think the coincidences speak for itself (sic)," Biller said.

But Larry Flener, communications manager for the Oklahoma City office, said the job change was a lateral move, fitting for someone with Fowlkes' varied experience.

"There was a need felt, and a job opportunity became available," Flener said. "He took it."

Fowlkes, reached at his home in Edmond, said he was on vacation.

"I'm painting lawn furniture," Fowlkes said. "I have no earthly idea what's been said" at the hearing in Washington.

Of his transfer to Oklahoma City, Fowlkes said he was excited about the new job. "I really feel good that they can use me in that capacity. It was my choice. I was not removed."

Tisch said he was aware of the complaints about Fowlkes, but told lawmakers that a petition bearing signatures of 65 workers at the Edmond office protesting Fowlkes' reassignment was in the works.

Phillips, a postal worker in Oklahoma City, and Biller described frustrating efforts by survivors to obtain benefits, even though they were told

postal officials would "bend all the rules" to ensure quick payment.

Phillips said her crying, 8-year-old son asked about two months after the attack: "Don't they know this paperwork is ruining everything?"

It was not until this month that her husband's funeral expenses were paid, she said.

Biller claimed that after an initial rush to help, postal officials "erected a bureaucratic stone wall," which "the postal service did not help the families climb over."

Chief complaint, he said, "was the lack of information about and assistance with benefits."

Larry Stemmons, a postal service regional director, agreed that "we did have some things that fell through the crack."

However, Stemmons said the problems have been "associated" with only four or five families. "The intent, the methodology ... that was followed was the right one," he said.

Postal officials admitted that Sherrill, whose job-hopping habits and poor work record were documented in an investigation following the shootings, should never have been hired at the Edmond office.

But, "mass murder is not a consequence which can reasonably be expected to flow from a faulty hiring decision," Charters said.